

THE GOSPEL FEAST.

Dr. Talmage on Men's Excuses For Not Becoming Christians.

What There Is in Religion—Inconsistencies of Professed Christians—Those Who Lack Time—The Procrastinators.

In a late sermon at Brooklyn Rev. T. DeWitt Talmage discoursed upon the beauty and attractiveness of the gospel feast, the text chosen being from Luke xiv. 15: "And they all with one consent began to make excuse." The preacher said:

After the invitations to a levee are sent out, the regrets come in. One man apologizes for non-attendance on one ground, another on another ground. The most of the regrets are founded on prior engagements. So in my text a great banquet was spread, the invitations were circulated, and now the regrets come in. The one gives an agricultural reason, the other a stock dealer's reason, the other a domestic reason. All poor reasons. The agricultural reason being that the man had bought a farm and wanted to see it. Could he not see it the next day? The stock dealer's reason being that he had bought five yoke of oxen, and he wanted to go and prove them. He had no business to buy them until he knew what they were. Besides that, a man who can own five yoke of oxen can command his own time. Besides that, he might have yoked two of them together and driven them on the way to the banquet, for locomotion was not as rapid then as now. The man who gave the domestic reason said he had got married. He ought to have taken his wife with him. The fact was they did not want to go. "And they all with one consent began to make excuse." So now God spreads a banquet; it is the gospel feast, and the table reaches across the hemispheres; and the invitations go out and multitudes come and sit down and drink out of the chalices of God's love, while other multitudes decline coming—the one giving this apology and the other giving that apology; "and they all with one consent begin to make excuse." I propose this morning, so far as God will help me, to examine the apologies which men make for not entering the Christian life.

Apology the first: I am not sure there is anything valuable in the Christian religion. It is pleaded that there are so many impositions in this day—so many things that seem to be real are sham. A gilded outside may have a hollow inside; there is so much quackery in physics, in ethics, in politics, that men come to the habit of incredulity, and after awhile they allow that incredulity to collide with our holy religion.

But, my friends, I think religion has made a pretty good record in the world. How many wounds it has saved; how many pillars of fire it has lifted in the midnight wilderness; how many simoon-struck Saharas it hath turned into the gardens of the Lord; how it hath stilled the choppy sea; what rosy light it hath sent streaming through the rift of the storm-cloud wrack; what pools of cool water it hath gathered for thirsty Hagar and Ishmael; what manna whiter than coriander seed it hath dropped all around the camp of hardly-bested pilgrims; what promises it hath sent out like holy watchers to keep the lamps burning around death-beds; through the darkness that lowers into the sepulcher, what flashes of resurrection morn!

Nothing in religion! Why, then, all those Christians were deceived when in their dying moments they thought they saw the castles of the blessed; and your child, with unutterable agony you put away in the grave, you will never see him again, nor hear his sweet voice, nor feel the throb of his young heart? There is nothing in religion! Sickness will come upon you. Roll and turn on your pillow. No relief. The medicine may be bitter, the night may be dark, the pain may be sharp. No relief. Christ never comes to the sick room. Let the pain stab. Let the fever burn. Curse it and die. There is nothing in religion! After awhile death will come. You will hear the pawing of the pale horse on the threshold. The spirit will be breaking away from the body, and it will take flight—whither? whither? There is no God, no ministering angels to conduct, no Christ, no Heaven, no home. Nothing in religion! Oh, you are not willing to adopt such a dismal theory. And yet the world is full of skeptics. And let me say there is no class of people for whom I have a warmer sympathy than for skeptics. We do not know how to treat them. We deride them. We caricature them. We, instead of taking them by the soft hand of Christian love, clutch them with the iron pincers of ecclesiasticism. Oh! if you knew how those men had fallen away from Christianity and become skeptics, you would not be so rough on them. Some were brought up in homes where religion was overdone. The most wretched day in the week was Sunday. Religion was driven into them with a trip-hammer. They had a surfeit of prayer meetings. They were stuffed and choked with catechisms. They were told by their parents that they were the worst children that ever lived, because they liked to ride down hill better than to read "Pilgrims Progress." They never heard their parents talk of religion but with the corners of their mouths drawn down and the eyes rolled up.

Others went into skepticism through

maltreatment on the part of some who professed religion. There is a man who says: "My partner in business was voluble in prayer-meeting, and he was officious in all religious circles, but he cheated me out of \$3,000, and I don't want any of that religion."

There are others who got into skepticism by a natural persistence in asking questions, why? or how? How can God be one Being in three persons? They cannot understand it. Neither can I. How can God be a complete sovereign, and yet man a free agent? They cannot understand it. Neither can I. They cannot understand why a holy God lets sin come into the world. Neither can I. They say: "Here is a great mystery; here is a disciple of fashion, frivolous and godless all her days—she lives on to be an octogenarian. Here is a Christian mother training her children for God and for Heaven, self-sacrificing, Christianlike, indispensable, seemingly, to that household—she takes the cancer and dies." The skeptic says: "I can't explain that." Neither can I.

Oh, I can see how men reason themselves into skepticism. With burning feet I have trod that blistering way. I know what it is to have a hundred nights poured into one hour. There are men in this audience who would give their thousands of dollars if they could get back to the old religion of their fathers. Such men are not to be caricatured but helped.

Other persons apologize for not entering the Christian life because of the incorrigibility of their temper. Now, we admit it is harder for some people to become Christians than for others; but the grace of God never came to a mountain that it could not climb, or to an abyss that it could not fathom, or to a bondage that it could not break.

Good resolution, reformatory effort, will not effect the change. It takes a mightier arm and a mightier hand to bend evil habits than the hand that bent the bow of Ulysses, and it takes a stronger lasso than ever held the buffalo on the prairie. A man cannot go forth with any human weapons and contend successfully against these Titans armed with upturn mountain. But you have known men into whose spirit the influence of the gospel of Christ came until their disposition was entirely changed.

"Oh," says some one, "I have a rough, jagged, impetuous nature, and religion can't do anything for me." Do you know that Martin Luther and Robert Newton and Richard Baxter were impetuous, all-consuming natures, yet the grace of God turned them into the mightiest usefulness?

Peter, with nature tempestuous as the sea that he once tried to walk, at one look of Christ went out and wept bitterly. Rich harvests of grace may grow on the tip-top of the jagged steep, and flocks of Christian graces may find pasturage in fields of bramble and rock. Though your disposition may be all abristle with fretfulness, though you have a temper a-gleam of quick lightnings, though your aversion be like that of the horse-leech, crying: "Give!" though damnable impurities have wrapped you in all-consuming fire—God can drive that devil out of your soul, and over the chaos and the darkness he can say: "Let there be light."

Converting grace has lifted the drunkard from the ditch, and snatched the knife from the hand of the assassin, and the false key from the burglar, and in the pestiferous lanes of the city met the daughter of sin under the dim lamp-light and scattered her sorrow and her guilt with the words: "Thy sins are forgiven—go and sin no more." For scarlet sin a scarlet atonement.

Other persons apologize for not entering the Christian life because of the inconsistencies of those who profess religion. There are thousands of poor farmers. They do not know the nature of soil nor the proper rotation of crops. Their corn is shorter in the stalk and smaller in the ear. They have ten less bushels to the acre than their neighbors. But who declines being a farmer because there are so many poor farmers?

There are thousands of incompetent merchants. They buy at the wrong time. They get cheated in the sale of their goods. Every bale of goods is to them a bale of disaster. They fail after awhile and go out of business. But who declines to be a merchant because there are so many incompetent merchants?

There are thousands of poor lawyers. They cannot draw a declaration that will stand the test. They cannot recover just damages. They cannot help a defendant escape from the injustice of his persecutors. They are the worst evidence against any case in which they are retained. But who declines to be a lawyer because there are so many incompetent lawyers? Yet there are tens of thousands of people who decline being religious because there are so many unworthy Christians. Now I say it is illogical.

Sickness will come and we will be pushed out toward the Red sea which divides this world from the next, and not the inconsistency of Christians, but the rod of faith will wave back the waters as a commander wheels his host. The judgment will come, with its thunder-shod solemnities, attended by bursting mountains and the deep laugh of earthquakes and suns will fly before the feet of God like sparks from the anvil, and 10,000 burning worlds shall blaze up like banners in the track of God omnipotent. Oh! then we will not stop and say: "There was a mean Christian; there was a cowardly Christian; there was a lying Christian; there was an impure Christian." In that day as now, "If thou be wise, thou shalt be

wise for thyself; but if thou scornest, thou alone shall bear it." Why, my brother, the inconsistency of Christians, so far from being an argument to keep you away from God, ought to be an argument to drive you to him.

Other persons apologize for not becoming Christians because they lack time. As though religion muddled the brain of the accountant, or tripped the tongue of the orator, or weakened the arm of the mechanic, or scattered the briefs of the lawyer, or interrupted the sales of the merchant. They bolt their store doors against it, and fight it back with trowels and with yardsticks, and cry: "Away with your religion from our store, our office, our factory!"

They do not understand that religion in this workaday world will help you to do anything you ought to do. It can lay a keel, it can sail a ship, it can buy a cargo, it can work a pulley, it can pave a street, it can fit a wristband, it can write a constitution, it can marshal a host. It is as appropriate to the astronomer as his telescope; to the chemist as his laboratory; to the mason as his plumb-line; to the carpenter as his plane; to the child as his marbles; to the grandfather as his staff.

No time to be religious here! You have no time not to be religious. You might as well have no clerks in your store, no books in your library, no compass on your ship, no rifle in the battle, no hat for your head, no coat for your back, no shoes for your feet. Better travel on toward eternity bareheaded and barefooted and houseless and homeless and friendless than to go through life without religion.

Did religion make Raleigh any less of a statesman, or Havelock any less of a soldier, or Grinnell any less of a merchant, or West any less of a painter? Religion is the best security in every bargain; it is the sweetest note in every song, it is the brightest gem in every coronet. No time to be religious! Why, you will have to take time to be sick, to be troubled, to die. Our world is only the wharf from which we are to embark for Heaven. No time to secure the friendship of Christ. One would think we had time for nothing else.

Other persons apologize for not entering the Christian life because it is time enough yet. That is very like those persons who send their regrets and say: "I will come in perhaps at 11 or 12 o'clock; I will not be there at the opening of the banquet, but I will be there at the close." Not yet! Not yet!

Now, I do not give any doleful view of this life; there is nothing in my nature, nothing in the grace of God, that tends toward a doleful view of human life. I have not much sympathy with Addison's description of the "Vision of Mirza," where he represents human life as being a bridge of a hundred arches and both ends of the bridge covered with clouds, and the race coming on, the most of them falling down through the first span and all of them falling down through the last span. It is a very dismal picture. I have not much sympathy with the Spanish proverb which says: "The sky is good and the earth is good—that which is bad is between the earth and the sky."

But while we as Christian people are bound to take a cheerful view of life, we must also confess that life is a great uncertainty, and that man who says: "I can't become a Christian because there is time enough yet," is running a risk infinite. You do not perhaps realize the fact that this descending grade of sin gets steeper and steeper, and that you are gathering up a rush and a velocity which after awhile may not answer to the brakes. O, my friends, be not among those who give their whole life to the world and then give their corpse to God. It does not seem fair while our pulses are in full play of health that we serve ourselves and serve the world, and then make God at last the present of a coffin. It is a great thing for a man on his dying pillow to repent—better that than never at all; but how much better, how much more generous, it would have been if he had repented fifty years before! My friends, you will never get over these procrastinations.

Here is a delusion. People think, "I can go on in sin and worldliness, but after awhile I will repent, and then it will be as though I had come at the very start." That is a delusion. No one ever gets fully over procrastination. If you give your soul to God some other time than this you will enter Heaven with only half the capacity for enjoyment and knowledge you might have had. There will be heights of blessedness you might have attained, you will never reach thrones of glory on which you might have been seated, but which you will never climb. We will never get over procrastination, neither in time nor in eternity. We have started on a march from which there is no retreat. The shadows of eternity gather on our pathway. How insignificant is time compared with the vast eternity!

This morning, voices roll down the sky, and all the worlds of light are ready to rejoice at your disenfranchisement. Rush not into the presence of the King ragged with sin, when you may have this robe of righteousness. Dash not your foot to pieces against the throne of a crucified Christ. Throw not your crown of life off the battlements. All the scribes of God are this moment ready with volumes of living light to record the news of your soul emancipated.

A large number of mad dogs are reported to be at large in Arizona.

KANSAS EXHIBIT.

Display of the Sunflower State at the World's Fair—What the Ladies Are Doing to Entertain Visitors.

TOPEKA, Kan., April 17.—The Kansas world's fair commissioners have left for Chicago to assist Commissioner Kern in arranging the Kansas exhibit. Mrs. Clark, the secretary, will remain until next November, but the office in Topeka will be kept open and in charge of an assistant throughout the summer in order to keep the exhibit supplied with fresh vegetables, fruits and other products of the soil.

One or more of the commissioners will be in Kansas a considerable part of the time to direct affairs at this end of the line, but the principal work of the commission will from this on be done in the Kansas building at Chicago. Daily car loads of special exhibits are forwarded from all parts of the state and it will require all the time and energy of the commission to get everything in readiness for the opening of the fair, May 1.

The finishing touches have not yet been put on the building, but Commissioner Kern writes that unless the unforeseen happens, nothing will be left undone on the night of April 30.

There is little in the Kansas building to attract interest just now except the Dyche display, but this is regarded by visitors as one of the greatest curiosities on the grounds, and many people view it daily. Next week, when Mrs. Clark reaches Chicago, the other exhibits will be unpacked and put in place.

The commissioners say that to the women of the state is due the credit of saving the reputation of the state. The railroads and other corporations managed by men have, of course, materially assisted the commission in collecting exhibits, but men as individuals have done little.

The ladies' parlor of the Kansas building will be an attractive feature of the state's display. The women of Leavenworth have contributed a gorgeous hand-painted sunflower frieze, and to harmonize with this the women of Newton will send a handsome rug. A Chicago piano company will contribute to the furnishing of the parlor as a free gift to the state an instrument of light wood valued at \$1,000. Painting of Kansas scenes done by Kansas women will adorn the walls of the room and a massive mantle of stone, wrought by Kansas women, will add to the effect. Among other ornamental things will be a beautiful stained glass window, lovely divans, richly upholstered chairs and a chair made of the horns of Texas steers—all the work of Kansas women.

The women of Shawnee county will furnish the reading room to blend with a frieze of dead grasses. In this room will be a table supplied with all the leading papers of Kansas.

Judge Adams, secretary of the state historical department, will be in charge of the historical exhibit. In addition to the more interesting collection of the state historical society will be included in this exhibit many contributions from the women of the state. Among other things there will be a complete history of the churches of Kansas.

Not the least interesting exhibit will be made by the educational institutions, including the public schools. The college faculties and public school teachers and pupils have been working on this display for more than a year.

The horticultural exhibit will be in charge of Prof. Wellhouse. Unfortunately last year was a bad fruit year in Kansas and he was unable to send a supply of fruits in cold storage, but he will have fresh fruits from gardens, vineyards and orchards daily as fast as they ripen. He is largely indebted to the women for contributions of preserved fruits and fruit products. One of the contributions of the women will be the state university in miniature, constructed of jellies of every possible variety and shade. To do this required 1,800 glasses. To add to the effect this will be lighted with electricity.

The Kansas commissioners expect the Kansas agricultural display, thanks to last year's enormous crops, to be the best in that line at the fair. There will be corn and wheat everywhere, with a plentiful supply of other products, all arranged in circles and other designs. Among the wheat samples will be some grown in northwestern Kansas, weighing 67½ pounds to the bushel. There will also be corn stalks 22 feet tall and remarkable growths of oats, barley, sorghum and broom corn.

The forestry building will contain some splendid specimens of Kansas woods. The most interesting, perhaps, will be a walnut log 4½ feet long and 78 inches in diameter and weighing 38,000 pounds, cut from a tree grown in Leavenworth county and which naturalists say was growing when Columbus discovered America. Another big growth in their collection will be a grapevine 10½ inches in diameter.

Prof. Haworth, of the state university, will be in charge of the geological exhibit. It will consist of all the different qualities of building and lead, zinc, salt, coal and other minerals produced in the state. The collection of lead and zinc specimens from the mines of Cherokee county, and the stone from all the quarries in the state. Salt will be shown in architecture lighted with electricity.

Prof. Dyche's natural history display is the property of the state university and consists of stuffed buffalo, elk, bear, mountain sheep, moose, wolves, coyotes, foxes, etc.—23 specimens in all. Back of and a part of this display will be a painted scene of a Kansas landscape, and the foreground will consist of natural buffalo and prairie grasses, trees, rocks, cliffs and streams of water so artistically arranged that one may not discover where the painting leaves off and nature begins. The Smithsonian institution has no collection which will compare with it. Prof. Dyche has been offered \$25,000 for it since he took it to Chicago, but of course it is not for sale.

Near Prof. Dyche's exhibit will stand a model of the great water power of the Blue river at Blue rapids, done by women out of the native gypsum of Marshall county. In connection with this will be a sunflower fountain by the women and school children of Emporia, the drinking places supplied with two silver cups each, contributed by different cities of the state. Water will pour out of the fountain through holes made in imitation of prairie dog holes and over the holes in bronze will be the dogs in the act of tumbling under cover. Close by the fountain will stand an old chair which was brought over in the Mayflower and lent to the commission by a Concordia woman. Also an old spinning wheel made in Strasburg, Germany, in 1823. Books and rare handiwork centuries old will be displayed from glass cases in this room.

The Kansas live stock display will be made in the general building devoted to that interest. Stock will be cared for without charge, and there will be many fine animals on exhibition from Kansas, to which premiums will be given by the Kansas commission in addition to those awarded by the national commission.

What is believed to be the largest steer in the United States will be on exhibition from Kansas. This animal is fourteen feet long from its horns to the root of its tail. It is taller than the average horse, measures twenty-seven inches around the ankle and is otherwise large in proportion and weighs 4,500 pounds. In addition to the display made by the state, the railroads will also have exhibits which promise to rival the other attractions in the Kansas building.

A Couple of Nominations.

WASHINGTON, April 17.—The President has sent to the senate the nominations of John H. Wise, of California, to be collector of customs for the district of San Francisco, and of William L. Kee, of West Virginia, to be principal clerk on private land claims in the general land office.

"OLD GLORY."

Commissioner Blount Followed Instructions in Taking Down the American Flag at Honolulu—Hawaiian Protectorate Ended.

WASHINGTON, April 15.—The news from Honolulu of the hauling down of the United States flag, it is said, was the subject of animated discussion at the cabinet meeting. Before going into the cabinet room, Secretary Gresham said to a reporter that he had received no information whatever aside from the newspapers.

When questioned further as to the truth of the statements contained in special despatches to Western newspapers that Mr. Blount was conniving at the restoration of Queen Liliuokalani and would support her return to the throne, if need be, by the forces of the United States ship Boston, he said he knew nothing about it and declined to express any opinion upon the subject. In regard to the hauling down of the United States flag, attention is called to these passages in the instructions issued under the previous administration by Secretary J. W. Foster to Minister Stevens, under date of February 11, 1893.

The phraseology of your proclamation in announcing your action in assumption of protection of the Hawaiian Islands in the name of the United States would appear to be tantamount to the assumption of the protectorate over those islands in behalf of the United States with all the rights and obligations which the term implies. To this extent it goes beyond the necessities of the situation and instructions as heretofore given you.

So far as your action amounts to according at the request of the de facto sovereign government of the Hawaiian Islands, to co-operation of the moral and material forces of the United States for the protection of life and property from apprehended disorders, your action is commended. But so far as it may appear to overstep that limit by setting the authority and power of the United States above that of the government of the Hawaiian Islands in the capacity of protector or to impair in any way the independent sovereignty of the Hawaiian government by substituting the flag and power of the United States as the symbol and manifestation of paramount authority, it is disavowed.

There is a diplomatic reticence around the White house concerning the nature of the instructions given Blount in his mission to Hawaii, but it is stated with some positiveness that he was given authority for hauling down the stars and stripes at Honolulu prior to his departure from Washington. It is understood that Mr. Blount was given definite instructions to withdraw the protectorate of the United States over Hawaii in order that this government might find itself freer in dealing with the main question of annexation, but on the day of his departure for San Francisco, he was cautioned to confide this information to no person whatever, in order that the motives and the intentions of the administration might not be construed so as to cause trouble among the Hawaiians.

Mr. Blount followed his instructions to the letter. He waited until the excitement incident to his arrival had completely died out and affairs were in a tranquil state before making known that the protectorate was at an end. He also made it known at the same time that the United States would still consider Hawaii and the Hawaiians under its guardianship, so far as outside interference was concerned, and in this also showed the caution which Mr. Cleveland and Secretary Gresham had impressed on him to deprive the announcement of any tinge of sensationalism. These are said to be the facts in the matter with reference to the instructions of Mr. Blount.

WORLD'S FAIR RATES.

They Average Higher Than Expected For the Country West of Chicago.

CHICAGO, April 15.—The basis of world's fair rates from Transmissouri territory was agreed upon yesterday. In that part of the territory from the Missouri to and including Colorado common points the basis will be 30 per cent reduction from present rates, or \$40 for the round trip. The present one way trip is \$30.65. The vote was unanimous, with the exception of one line, which voted in favor of a \$45 round-trip rate.

From Utah common points the rate will be a fare and a third for the round trip. The agreed world's fair round trip rate is \$70. No round trip rates are now quoted from either Colorado or Utah common points. The Transmissouri lines will meet again to-day to consider the establishment of one way rates and special excursion rates.

The basis as agreed to averages higher than expected, and will cause a slightly higher round trip rate from California. Lines interested in Pacific coast business will meet Monday to establish world's fair rates, and are almost certain to decide on a \$100 basis for the round trip.

Nominations.

WASHINGTON, April 15.—The president sent the following nominations to the senate to-day:

Richard H. Alvey, of Maryland, chief justice of the court of appeals of the District of Columbia.

Martin F. Morris, of District of Columbia, associate justice of the court of appeals for the District of Columbia.

Seth Shepard, of Texas, associate justice of the court of appeals for the District of Columbia.

Levi H. Manning, of Arizona, surveyor-general of Arizona.

John Lafabee, of South Dakota, receiver of public money at Rapid City, S. D.

William Haugen, of Minnesota, receiver of public money at Crookston, Minn.

Lucius Q. C. Lamar, of Mississippi, recorder of the general land office.

Robert K. Gillespie, of Tennessee, principal clerk of the public lands in the general land office.

John C. Geraghty, of Minnesota, collector of customs for Minnesota.

Charles H. Miller, of Illinois, surveyor of customs for Galena, Ill.